



Dartmouth College HANOVER · NEW HAMPSHIRE · 03755

Office of the Dean of Freshmen (603) 646 · 2681

ALBERT I. DICKERSON
Dean of Freshmen

D. SCOTT PALMER
Assistant Dean of Freshmen

August 24, 1967

Parents Letter #2

TO THE PARENTS OF MEMBERS OF THE CLASS OF 1971

I have been happy to receive letters from many of you in response to my Parents Letter in April. (This was the four-page printed letter expressing pleasure over your son's admission and inviting you to write to me about him.) The present letter is the second in a series of six or seven which I shall send to you periodically through the year, supplementing your letters from your son, in trying to help you interpret and understand his freshman year experience - a unique and exciting adventure for most. To you who haven't written, I repeat the request that you send along such facts and insights as may help us do a wiser job in counseling your son.

Your son will be leaving soon for Hanover to begin his first Dartmouth year. In this letter I shall suggest a few matters which experience indicates it would be worthwhile for you to discuss with your son before his departure; and I am enclosing two items: a reprint concerning College rules and regulations from the Student Handbook 1967-68 and Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgement. I urge that you and your son read and discuss the material in the Student Handbook reprint and Sources. You may keep the reprint at home for reference as your son will receive the complete Student Handbook when he arrives.

In a report to the President of the College prepared by a Special Committee on Rules a few years ago appears a relevant statement:

"The College's ideal is the training of the 'whole man'; in striving toward this ideal, training of mind and body cannot be separated from the formation of character and the development of standards of conduct. In these two latter realms, the responsibility must perforce be shared with the home, the church, and other social agencies, and the primary responsibility must rest with each individual."

As I indicated in the pamphlet sent to your son, Freshman Year 1967-8 (and let me repeat the offer of a copy of that pamphlet for your own use, if you wish it), Dartmouth operates on the assumption that these young men have reached the point where they must begin to make their own decisions and to learn from their own mistakes. It goes without saying that this freedom to make their own choices, which in varying degrees is new to most freshmen, involves both important opportunities and some dangers.

Most freshmen are going through that stage in the approach toward maturity in which they establish the independence of their own personalities. For some, this stage brings emotional stresses. It may also cause some stresses for you, as parents, and may demand considerable understanding on your own part. This important, desirable, and (sooner or later) inevitable, stage in the progress to emotional maturity produces temporarily in some young men an assertiveness of ideas which they have adopted as their own, and especially of ideas differing from their parents'. To some parents, this phase is disturbing, seeming to nullify eighteen or so years of careful upbringing. Such a negation, I am authoritatively told, is almost never really what happens in any lasting fashion. In any event, may I bespeak, on your son's behalf, your sympathetic understanding if in the next few months or the next four years he has some hard times, or gives you some hard times, or - as is most frequent in these circumstances - both. (They not infrequently give some hard times to us at the College in the process!)

With regard to automobiles, you undoubtedly are already aware that freshmen are not permitted to own, maintain or operate motor vehicles in Hanover or its vicinity. We shall appreciate your cooperation in the observance of this regulation. The regulation purposely avoids a precise definition of "vicinity." For example, a student from western New York once inquired whether garaging his car in Woodstock (18 miles) would be in violation, or whether he should choose Rutland (45 miles). Maintaining a car in either place - or in Albany, for that matter - would have been in violation. On the other hand, a freshman who relieved a sleepy upperclassman at the wheel and drove right to the door of Topliff Hall would, if apprehended, be commended for his good judgment rather than disciplined for his violation.

The regulations governing the use of intoxicating beverages reflect the careful thinking of many here - including trustees, administrators, teachers, parents, and undergraduate leaders - concerning a problem that is older than the oldest university and indeed as old as civilization. Prohibition of student drinking has been tried on many campuses, including this one, with the widely accepted conclusion that, while campus prohibition may tend to conceal drinking somewhat, it is more likely to exaggerate the problem than to cure it, with the supplementary observation that unenforceable regulation is poor education. Our regulations represent our intention to hold those Dartmouth students who do drink (many do not) to standards of responsible, mature conduct with regard to drinking as well as other things. It is critically important that you and your son understand that intoxication is regarded and treated as grave misconduct at Dartmouth.

If I may share our experience with you, there are two areas of temptation to serious trouble for an undergraduate which can often be removed, or at least lessened, by close, continuing, straightforward understanding with his parents. One is on the use of alcohol and the other is on adherence to the strictest standards of academic honesty and propriety.

Most responsible young men will abide by their express undertakings given parents on not using alcohol at least until they are old enough to bear legal responsibility for its misuse. With respect to academic

propriety, many a young man has been saved from the tragedy of taking disastrous shortcuts by knowing, in the deep direct way which comes only through intimate conversation, that his parents do not expect him to excel - or even stay in college - at such a cost to himself.

A number of students in the recent past, who have found themselves in disciplinary difficulties for academic dishonesty, have sought to justify their actions with the claim that they did not realize that failure to acknowledge indebtedness was plagiarism. Their secondary schools permitted so-called "research themes" that were in fact a potpourri of unacknowledged ideas and quotations. Dartmouth's expectation in this regard are set forth in the two pamphlets, Student Handbook 1967-68 and Sources: Their Use and Acknowledgement, mentioned above. These are of the utmost importance. The Sources pamphlet, when first published seven years ago, was a helpful factor in diminishing markedly the number of penalties for plagiarism. To supplement this pamphlet, if necessary, I encourage you to urge your son to seek the counsel of his teachers at Dartmouth if he is in any doubt whatever about this particular academic obligation. In the discharge of all his academic responsibilities, he will be working within the climate of Dartmouth's honor principle.

The desire to excel is a worthy one, but a new perspective is required when several hundred young men who are accustomed to excelling among their school groups come together on a college campus in a kind of competition which they have not faced before. The problem of survival is not as acute as many freshmen fear; we normally lose by academic failure only one or two men out of about 800 in the first two terms; and almost invariably this is the result of immature use of freedom rather than any inadequacy of ability or preparation. But excelling is, by definition, for the few; and the A's and B's to which our students have become accustomed in secondary school are sparingly granted by college instructors.

During the last two years, concern about the experimentation of young people with LSD, marijuana and other psychedelic agents has been widespread. Newspapers and magazines have been full of articles on the subject, some of them making alarming estimates of the number of young people of high school and college age who at one time or another have engaged or will engage in such experimentation. There should be no uncertainty among Dartmouth students and their parents about the College's position on this subject. I call your attention to the following statement in the Student Handbook.

"The use or possession of any narcotic or hallucinogenic drug in any form (other than prescribed by a physician) is prohibited. Separation is considered the appropriate penalty."

We are indebted to Doctors Farnsworth and Prout of the Harvard University Health Services for a recent analysis of the physiological and psychological dangers of hallucinogenic drugs, a reprint of which you will find enclosed. College students inclined toward experimentation should also be fully aware of the severe punishments provided by federal and state statutes for the use, purchase or sale of such drugs - especially the sale or giving away of narcotics. For example, New Hampshire law provides a

mandatory sentence of 5-10 years for sale or gift of marijuana or any narcotic drug; courts are specifically forbidden to lighten or suspend such sentences. And there should be no uncertainty about the College's obligation to cooperate fully with law enforcement agencies.

The matters discussed in the preceding paragraphs - drinking, academic honesty, and experimentation with drugs - are probably not problems for your son; but a talk about them rarely hurts; and even one Dartmouth student saved from a grievous mistake makes it worth mentioning questions which for most will never be a problem.

I believe that your careful consideration of all the College regulations, jointly with your son, can be helpful to him, to us, and to you.

We must honestly face the fact that the opportunities of any college to exercise a controlling influence on the habits and deportment of individual students are limited, however determined may be its efforts to make all of its institutional influences good ones. One area of conduct in which this is true, among many others of great importance, is that of a man's consideration for other people, wherein the habits previously developed in home and school tend, with occasional exceptions, to continue dominant in college.

At a somewhat superficial level of consideration for others, I might mention the amenities of letter-writing. Faculty advisers have reported to me with understandable shock that some freshmen whom they have invited to dinner have failed even to acknowledge the invitation; and a larger number neglect to give appropriate expression of their appreciation afterward. A parting reiteration from parents to sons of what has been inculcated in the home in these matters might be in order.

If I thought it would do any good, I would urge you to urge your sons to organize their lives at college in order to get adequate sleep. However, I have about concluded that nothing that you may tell them or that I may tell them will have any direct or immediate effect. For most freshmen, their first college year is the first time in their lives in which nobody has paid any attention to the time they go to bed. Many of them, therefore, spend their first college months trying to outdo one another in "late booking." Many of them appear in my office for conferences looking sleepy, pale, and bleary-eyed, ready to boast about how little sleep they get, about the number of "all-nighters" they've put in during the past week. Sooner or later, they discover that this does not really pay off in grades or in any other way; but experience seems to be the only way they discover this. Surveys conducted by the student radio station continue to show that freshmen stay up later than upperclassmen.

Certainly learning the mature use of freedom is the greatest challenge of the first college year. The most valuable wisdom your son will gain during the coming year will be learned in the process of making the many kinds of choices that he will have to make from day to day.

Few of the choices made during Freshman Week are irrevocable, but one of the unchangeable decisions is the question of enrollment in certain of

the ROTC options available at Dartmouth. Your son, therefore, should have the benefit of all your thinking on this subject before he leaves for college. As I have said to a number of you who have asked my advice with regard to your son's decision, the decision is such a thoroughly personal matter that no college officer can properly undertake to make this decision for your son. We make every effort to provide you with all the relevant information. The pamphlet ROTC Programs at Dartmouth, which was sent to your son in May, deserves his and your careful consideration.

To you mothers and fathers who are planning to accompany your sons to Hanover at the opening of college, I extend an invitation, on behalf of the Green Key Society and the Interdormitory Council, to a reception for freshmen, their parents, and faculty advisers on the lawn of Baker Library on Monday afternoon, September 18, at 3:30 o'clock. This may give you an opportunity to meet your son's faculty adviser, although you should anticipate that some advisers will not have returned to the campus by this date. (Lest those of you who cannot come fear that your son will be "out of it," I should add that the sons not accompanied by parents are always in the majority.)

The Hanover Inn is undergoing renovations which will severely limit its accommodations through the fall. To provide lounge facilities, the College will open a "Parents Lounge" in College Hall at the following times:

Saturday, September 16	Noon - 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, September 17	Noon - 8:00 p.m.
Monday, September 18	9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

To you fathers, may I suggest that you circle February 16-18 on your calendars as Freshman Fathers Weekend. This is an occasion arranged and conducted by the officers of the freshman class, and in due course their invitation will be sent to you.

Let me now introduce my associates in the Freshman Office with whom you may be having contacts during the year when you write or visit.

The Assistant Dean of Freshmen is Scott Palmer. He was graduated from Dartmouth with cum laude honors in international relations and attended the School of Political and Administrative Sciences, University of Chile, on a fellowship. He was awarded a master's degree in Latin American Studies by Stanford, and subsequently spent two years in the Peace Corps, teaching at the University of Huamanga in Ayacucho, Peru. While at Dartmouth he won the Barrett Cup, given to the student who contributes most to student life at the college, and the "Manners Makyth Man" award for his conduct on the football team. Mr. Palmer was an All-Ivy League end in 1958 and captain of the varsity crew.

Mrs. Frederick Brock is Assistant to the Dean of Freshmen and my secretary. The Registrar of Freshmen is Mrs. Hayward Dow. Mrs. Wayne Allard is our receptionist and office secretary.

I am afraid that this has been a pretty solemn letter, for the most part, and this is hardly appropriate because there is a great deal that is fun in the freshman year and not a little that is funny, both for the freshmen and for people like you and me who will be sharing their experiences vicariously. You will find some lighter notes in later letters, a number of which have been contributed by parents who have responded with humor to the challenges of being fathers or mothers of freshmen.

We had one such from a '68 parent even before the son's arrival:

"Rarely is a parent asked to write about his own child so I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without a reply to your kind invitation. I don't want to tell you too much about Hank because I would rather he come as a complete surprise.

"From your letter I gather you already know much more about Hank than we do. Of course you can't know that he can put up a tent in record time and follow that feat by pumping up two air mattresses simultaneously - one with a hand pump and the other with a foot pump. He tried doing three at one time (blowing into the third by mouth) but that proved too slow. He can crack open a coconut with proficiency, and he has an uncanny sense which enables him to disappear whenever there is any work to be done around the house.

"Naturally we love him very much. Are you sure you're ready?"

We were ready for Hank and his 800 classmates, and we're looking forward to your son and his.

Sincerely yours,

Albert D. Dickerson



Dartmouth College HANOVER · NEW HAMPSHIRE · 03755

Office of the Dean of Freshmen (603) 646 · 2681

ALBERT I. DICKERSON
Dean of Freshmen

D. SCOTT PALMER
Assistant Dean of Freshmen

November 6, 1967

Dear Members of the Class of 1971:

Enclosed are reports for those of you who are standing at "unsatisfactory" levels (D or E) in your courses at mid-term.

I enclose also a letter to your parents which will accompany your mid-term reports. This is one of a series of six or seven Parents Letters which I send during the year in an effort to strengthen the understanding at home of just what the freshman year experience is like. You will find in this letter statistics which show that a very large proportion of low mid-term grades are improved on the final grades.

Dean Palmer and I hope to extend our acquaintanceship throughout the class as rapidly as possible. Please feel free to come in at any time without awaiting our letters of invitation.

Sincerely yours,

Albert I. Dickerson



Dartmouth College HANOVER · NEW HAMPSHIRE · 03755

Office of the Dean of Freshmen (603) 646 · 2681

ALBERT I. DICKERSON
Dean of Freshmen

D. SCOTT PALMER
Assistant Dean of Freshmen

November 3, 1967

Parents Letter #3

Dear Parents of '71:

This letter is primarily to accompany mid-term reports in courses in which your sons are standing at "unsatisfactory" levels - i.e., "D" or "E." If the normal experience of the past several years prevails, a half to a third of you will find one or more such reports in this letter. To those of you who receive reports, I want to give a little background for realistic appraisal of your sons' situations.

Even among those of you whose sons have not received any of these mid-term reports, I know that in recent weeks many have received worried or frustrated letters from their sons. The majority of freshmen have been finding, during the recent wave of hour examinations, that more academic effort than they have ever previously exerted is producing grades in the C range. This is normal.

To all of you I should like to give a brief report on the first two months of your sons' freshman year at Dartmouth.

MID-TERM
GRADES

At mid-term, in order that students may check their scholastic standing in their respective courses in time to improve their work if it is at an unsatisfactory level, instructors report advisory grades of freshmen standing D or E. (No higher grades are reported at this time.) Normally, as is indicated above, barely more than half of the members of the Freshman Class pass mid-terms without any E's or D's. In the last three classes, which had exceptionally good records, better than two-thirds of the freshmen escaped mid-term reports at this time. If you do not find a card enclosed with this letter (and I can see you shaking the envelope now) it means that your son is one of these and is currently standing C- or better in all of his courses (unless we have inserted a slip in a wrong envelope, which, alas, we almost always do among the Joneses and Smiths). This is the way they look:

JONES JOHN J	71	ENGL	1	E2	67F	999
STUDENT NAME	CLASS	COURSE	GRADE	TERM	ADVISER	

MID-TERM GRADES

At mid-term, in order that students may check their scholastic standing in their respective courses in time to improve their work if it is at an unsatisfactory level, instructors report advisory grades of freshmen standing D or E. (No higher grades are reported at this time.)

EXPLANATION OF GRADE

- D - Passing, but unsatisfactory
- E-1 - Slightly below passing
- E-2 - Considerably below passing
- E-3 - Impossible of passing

The cards which are enclosed show grades lower than C-. The grade of D is considered unsatisfactory but passing. E-1 is slightly below passing and E-2 considerably below passing. It is assumed to be next to hopeless for a man to achieve a passing grade in a course in which he stands E-3 at mid-term. A man receiving a grade of E-3 should promptly discuss with his instructor and with me the desirability of dropping the course and taking a failing grade in it, in order to concentrate on his other courses.

With honest effort, most low mid-term grades can be pulled up to a satisfactory level, and the majority of them are. For example, you may be interested in these figures concerning last fall's mid-term grades compared to final grades for the fall term. Of all the mid-term D's, 74.7% were converted to final grades of C- or better; 20.5% remained at D; 4.7% dropped to final E's.

Among mid-term E-1's, 45.6% were converted to final grades of C- or better; 85.4% were converted to a final grade of D or better; and 14.5% remained at the failing level. Among mid-term E-2's, 66.6% finally passed (one with an A!).

These figures are quoted to show what application and self-discipline can and do accomplish after mid-term for students of low standing at that time, with the help of their growing skill in handling college courses and in using time efficiently. The latter is the most important lesson learned during the beginning terms at college.

For those who have a particular need of developing these skills, we offer special assistance during the remaining weeks of the term. Mr. Kramer of the Office of Student Counseling conducts a seminar in study techniques during the remaining weeks of this first term for freshmen whose mid-term grades indicate need for such assistance. I have invited those freshmen who have two or three mid-term reports to sign up for this program with Mr. Kramer.

ADVANCE CREDITS AND EXEMPTIONS

Another type of enclosure which some of you will find in this envelope (shake it again!) is a different form of IBM card which shows credits and/or exemptions which have been granted to your son on admission. To avoid repetition of work already well done in secondary school, Dartmouth for a good many years has recognized exceptional preparation among its incoming freshmen. Course credit for one or more term courses is given to those freshmen who at or before entrance present satisfactory evidence of college-level competence in any subject in the Dartmouth curriculum. Such credit does not carry any grade (or "quality points") with it, but does count as a course (unit) passed. Many entering freshmen have studied a subject thoroughly enough in the course of their secondary education to gain a solid introduction to a discipline, even though their level is less than that required for Dartmouth course credit. For such students a proficiency exemption is granted which carries with it a reduction in the humanities, science, and social science distributive requirement by one term course in a particular discipline. This allows a student a wider choice by freeing him from one or more of the specific degree requirements and gives him entry into more advanced courses. If you would like more detailed information, please write us for the pamphlet Recognition of Exceptional Preparation.

*

*

*

ABOUT WORRYING

As I observed in the opening paragraphs, there are a good many students without any D's and E's who are doing their share of worrying. You may remember that I forecast this prospective experience in my August letter. There is considerable shock for many Dartmouth students, who have been accustomed to receiving only A's and B's in secondary school and perhaps without a great deal of effort, to find in some or possibly in all their Dartmouth courses that they are working extremely hard and receiving mediocre or inferior grades because of lack of experience with college-type examinations, inadequate training in writing, unfamiliarity with new types of subject matter, need for practice in the organization of college-level work, or inexperience with the quantity and quality of work expected by college teachers.

Let me add two or three more observations about this business of worrying. The first is that it is a normal, and probably in general a quite wholesome, phenomenon of the freshman year. It is the blithely unworried among the relatively low hangers who worry me. They are most often the ones who come a cropper. The others who are "running scared," as long as they don't panic (and few do), are most often the ones who win out. Of course, when one encounters a badly worried freshman, one cannot help sharing the distress that his parents feel; and I must say that every fall I am re-impressed by the responsiveness of Dartmouth teachers to the needs of such students for encouragement and help. However, I sometimes ask myself this question: suppose a college - through engaging a massive corps of counselors and hand-holders and by utilizing all of the ingenious devices, overt and subliminal, that psychologists could dream up - should be able, without lowering academic standards, to remove all of the stresses from the college experience: would this be a good thing? I suspect that a lot of the growing which is done during this period might not take place without the stresses that are a normal part of the experience.

THE LETTER HOME

Another general observation about the worrying business is that the typical "letter home" tends, usually quite unintentionally, to picture things as somewhat bleaker than they are. I think this, too, is a wholesome thing: that a student can unburden himself of his anxieties in his letters home and then, somewhat purged of worry for the nonce, go about his business with more or less normal equilibrium. More often than not, when the "letters home" suggest to understandably distressed parents that the student may be on the verge of a crack-up, on the campus scene he is going about his business with normal poise. In conference, his anxieties will usually prove sincere and genuine; but when encountered with his companions on the street or in the dining hall he will look thoroughly chipper and healthy.

If your son has written or telephoned you suggesting that he should perhaps leave Dartmouth and transfer to another college, you should not regard this as a rare or exceptionally worrisome thing. Letters of this sort are dispatched homewards by freshmen in some numbers every autumn from every college in the land. By this time of year, Dean Palmer and I normally have already heard this question discussed by several freshmen, and one feels sure that others are talking to their friends and writing home about it.

I'm sure I don't need to spell out the reasons. I shall have more to say on this subject in a later letter, in reference to what I call the "January Syndrome." Briefly, every college student comes from a school and community in which he has had recognition. He has been recognized and, more often than not, considerably

respected for his particular qualities and talents. He arrives on a college campus with some hundreds of fellow-freshmen, all equally bereft of status. Inevitably, they will wonder how they are going to measure up in this new group, which is larger in most cases than were their school groups and is known to be selective. Unless one is totally lacking in sensitivity and humility, there will be some self-analysis and anxiety. One student, in the first week of college, came right to the point. "Sir," he said, "I don't think I should be here. I've been talking to these guys who got all A's without cracking a book. Now I had to work for my grades, and they weren't all A's, either." I told him I was confident of his success, but probably we ought to worry about his friends. Others approach the question of belonging here less directly, talking about their health, some especially good course offered by the college back home, etc.

A word on the subject of "flunking out" - a phrase somewhat loosely used by freshmen during the mid-term period. Only a man with final failure in all three courses, or two E's and one D, would normally be considered for suspension at the end of the first term. It seems fully possible - even probable - that there will be none such. Two course failures will result in probation. One failure plus one D will result in an academic warning. The tolerances for adjustment and getting on one's feet are broad during this first term: for example, a man with two C-s and one failure will be, technically, in "good standing" at the end of the term, although he could not safely continue at that level of achievement.

Some freshmen have a way of referring to mid-term reports as "warnings." These reports are, in a sense, unofficial warnings that the level of work to date in those courses is unsatisfactory. But these reports at mid-term are not grades, and do not become part of the permanent record, and are not to be confused with "official college warnings" for unsatisfactory scholarship or conduct.

Although it may be presumptuous of me to suggest what should be your reaction to the mid-term grades of your son herein reported, our experience is that the great majority need sympathy, understanding, and encouragement more than they need chiding and exhortation. If your son is already worried, it does not help to add your anxiety to his.

Exhortation, however, may be in order for your son if his past pattern of academic behavior has reflected sporadic attention to his studies and achievement clearly below his abilities; or if you have reason to believe that he has been doing less than his best at Dartmouth this fall, has taken too many weekends, or otherwise through lack of sustained effort has failed by his own neglect to live up to your and our expectations of him. It would be appropriate for you to encourage your son to take advantage of the counseling services available to him and to see me or Dean Palmer if he is in any difficulty.

*

*

*

TRANSPORTATION

I hope you will use your influence against your son's planning too tight a travel schedule coming and going for his winter and spring holidays, whether he is traveling by plane, train or automobile. If the latter, he will be dependent on others, but even here influence can be exerted. It is encouraging to note in this college generation an increasing sobriety over the perils of automobile travel: although students cover considerable distances

in surprisingly short times, it is standard procedure to keep one passenger awake to talk to the driver, to shift drivers at frequent intervals, to provide seat belts, etc., and the adolescent urge to speed for speed's sake has been generally outgrown. But the optimistic inclination of youth tends not to take into account the unpredictability of weather from November to April everywhere, and especially in the north-east. Weather can knock the most reasonable travel schedules - whether by plane, car, or train - into a cocked hat, and it frequently does. For those who are pushing to meet a tight schedule, unnecessary hazards are undertaken.

Registration for the next term is from 1:30 to 4:30 and 7:00 to 10:00 in the afternoon and evening of Wednesday, January 3.

Looking ahead a bit, experience leads us to expect that between now and June several dozen freshmen will come in with requests, for extraordinarily varied reasons, for permission to bring cars to the campus, even though there are well-known regulations against this. Some freshmen will mistakenly assume that it is permissible for them to bring cars temporarily and have them impounded here. This is not permitted, unless authorized by this office in advance. If any number of these requests were granted, the number of petitioners would certainly multiply astonishingly. One of the perennial diversions of this office is to admire the variety and ingenuity of these requests and the good humor of the usual parting remark: "That's what I thought you'd say, but it doesn't hurt to try..." One would be callous not to sympathize with the logistical problem of the seasonal home-campus-home transportation of those vast quantities of clothing, sports paraphernalia, electronic equipment, etc., etc.; but....

*

*

*

A GOOD BEGINNING

Having been concerned earlier in this letter with the anxieties which constitute a normal part of the first weeks of college, in the hope of relieving some of these concerns, let me turn now to some of the things which make us feel that this has been a good fall at Dartmouth. Academically, it does seem that the Class of 1971, as intimated above, is off to a good start.

The letters home have surely commented, invariably and with emphasis, on how hard the writers are working, on how intensively they are "booking." Allowing a little for the hyperbole which is customary in the "Dear Mom and Dad" form of literature, there is a good deal of truth in the accounts you have received. Freshmen find very quickly that their instructors expect a good deal more work of them than did their secondary school teachers. A great many of them are genuinely puzzled for a while in trying to figure out "what the prof wants." The introductory foreign language courses, in which most freshmen are enrolled, proceed at a pretty fast clip, and this involves difficulty for some students of excellent general ability who have come to college with a minimum of linguistic training.

The conduct record of '71 continues good to date. There has so far been only one disciplinary case resulting in a major penalty, which is a pretty good record for 800 highly kinetic young men.

When we speak this early in the year of the Class of 1971 appearing to be a good class off to a good start, it is of course an impressionistic comment -

reporting the impressions conveyed to us by teachers, faculty advisers, members of the Interdormitory Council, leaders of the Outing Club's Freshman Trip and other upperclassmen.

One of the qualities mentioned with unusual frequency with respect to the new class is its maturity. Perhaps this is an observation that one should not dwell on publicly. I have discovered that some young men bristle at this kind of praise from their elders. They seem to figure that it is somehow an insult to be accorded this kind of approval by the Older Generation and that there must be something wrong with them if they earn it. However, this comment with respect to '71 has been offered most frequently by fellow-students of the three upper classes.

During the last two years, student government has set a new keynote with respect to freshman traditions. Instead of seeking to enforce participation in these, they have all been declared optional. However, many of these traditions are continuing strongly on their own vitality. There are enough freshmen who enjoy building bonfires for football rallies that this year's efforts have been notable - including the crash rebuilding of one prematurely ignited by vandals. The '71's won the tug-of-war in a romp - which they just barely refrained from turning into a dangerous gallop down the Main Street - just barely. Many '71's, like many '70's, have lamented the early disappearance of freshman hats, the wearing of which is no longer required. "Why did they take our beanies away?" many say. It seems not to have occurred to them to wear them in defiance of "optionality."

On other fronts, among "new traditions," the second year's program of book discussions in Freshman Week again enlisted strong participation - more than half the class joining in these student-led seminars, many of which continued in animated discussion for two hours or more.

It's been a good fall at Dartmouth. After New England's drippy "regular" summer, there has been a golden Indian summer, right up to now. Our very strong freshman soccer team went to Providence undefeated and gave the traditionally strong Brown freshmen their first defeat after 37 consecutive victories over the past several seasons. A week later, our freshmen yielded to Harvard, 2-1; they weren't quite able to contain two very talented foreign players on the Harvard team. They have been defeating the varsity regularly in scrimmage, they tell me. The '71 football team lost to the Holy Cross freshmen, who had the advantage of extensive pre-season practice; but in winning from the Harvard freshmen here, on the Friday before the varsity game, they looked big, talented, well-manned at all positions, and very spirited. As this is being written, they are headed for another big test in New Haven.

There's a yeasty ferment in the air, a lively interest among the students in the world around them and the big issues of these times. The '71's seem just as much involved in these as the seniors and juniors.

Sincerely yours,

Albert D. Dickerson



Dartmouth College HANOVER · NEW HAMPSHIRE · 03755

Office of the Dean of Freshmen (603) 646 · 2681

ALBERT I. DICKERSON
Dean of Freshmen

D. SCOTT PALMER
Assistant Dean of Freshmen

December 27, 1967

Parents Letter #4

Dear Parents of '71:

First, let me wish to you, and to your '71 sons who are our bond of mutual interest and concern, a very good New Year. Most of you will still be together when this letter reaches you - unless something unexpected happens between this writing and the scheduled mailing date, or in the vagaries of the mails thereafter.

First Term Grade Reports

Since this letter is written to accompany the grade reports of your son, we should say something about first-term grades. Very likely there is in your home at this moment too intense a concern about grades: too intense for a variety of reasons in a variety of situations, but, speaking more generally, because (a) grades are never a precise measure of learning and (b) grades for the first ten weeks of a student's college career are often a very imperfect measure of his intellectual potential or his effort.

Your son will get his grades when he registers for the winter term on January 3. He probably already knows pretty well what they are. Anyway, you will now be able to give him The Word from the enclosed report. (One freshman was in just before leaving for the holidays, very eager to get his psychology grade. I told him it hadn't been reported yet, and suggested he could give his instructor the usual self-addressed postcard. "I don't want it on a postcard!" he said.)

These grades won't mean much to you without some frame of reference. (I discovered this when I got an IBM grade report like the enclosed for one of my sons who went to another college, without any explanation: this is one of the reasons why these Parents Letters have been concocted.) Based on the experience of recent years, the breakpoints between the quarters of the Class of 1971 on the basis of point average will be: top quarter: 5.0-4.0; second quarter: 3.5-4.0; third quarter: 3.0-3.5; lowest quarter: 3.0 and below.

In a "Happy New Year" letter like this one, it would be nice if all these reports could be straight A's, but there will be only about a dozen or so of these.

If your son has always up to now been in the highest quarter in school (as most of them have) and now appears in one of the lower quarters (as three quarters of them do), I can only remind you that he is working now as a member of a rather carefully selected group of students whose range of ability is much higher and narrower than the range of abilities of students in almost any secondary school; and only one-fourth of them can be in the top quarter! Some of us do our sons little justice by holding up to them unreasonable standards of achievement: sometimes, perhaps, because we achieved at that level ourselves; often because we didn't and are looking to him to realize our unrealized ambitions. The compassion of college counselors and deans is spent in largest measure on the student who is pushing himself as hard as he can and being pressured by parents for higher grades than he is earning.

Many of us who make up American society pay little daily heed in the family circle to the life of the mind and to excellence in its exercise. If our sons and daughters combine qualities of competitiveness and competence, they may "compete" themselves into selective colleges and arrive on the campuses without any real understanding of why they are there. If this happens and they get to college without any real feeling of the importance of intellectual exercise for its own sake, this is not their fault, but ours. Certainly the colleges contain more students whose motivations are either of the wrong kind or are insufficient in degree than society can afford. (The undermotivated ones are affectionately known as "loose hangers" in the undergraduate vernacular.)

During the fall many freshmen who participate in the College's financial aid program have expressed to me their concern over the danger of losing their scholarships if their grades were as low as they feared. It is true that scholarship men generally are a group of superior promise and that the Board on Admission and Financial Aid holds them up to academic standards which are in keeping with their individual promise. However, the Board has never had an inclination, on the basis of first term records, even when these are quite disappointing, to pull the rug out from under scholarship men as long as there are evidences of serious effort on their part. The Office of Financial Aid, in fact, omits sending letters of warning at this time to freshmen whose records are obviously below the acceptable level, assuming (a) they realize this, and (b) they are determined to improve during the coming term.

Has your son during the last term made reference to his doing what is known in the collegiate trade as "heavy booking"? (In periods of maximum intensity it is "power booking.") Allowing, as we have previously, for a bit of hyperbole, there is nevertheless evidence in statistics released by Baker Library concerning book circulation in recent years that the rich resources of the library are being used by this college generation much more actively than heretofore.

The January Syndrome

As you receive this, your son will be thinking about his return to Hanover and may indeed be on his way. This is therefore an appropriate time for description of what I call the January Wish-I-Were-Somewhere-Else Syndrome, to which I alluded in the November letter. This is a phenomenon which will be manifesting itself in residential colleges all over the country during the next few weeks. Happily for Dartmouth, the calendar of our three-term, three-course program removes one of the main elements of the syndrome. Your son came home for the holidays with his first college finals under his belt. They weren't anywhere near as traumatic an experience as the sophomores had made him believe. The fact that these first finals are now behind him, for better or for worse, gives the Dartmouth freshman a welcome feeling of relief and of belonging.

But speaking generally, the campus-bound freshman as January approaches is not a happy man. Home had never looked so good to him. You were never so liberal with the keys to the car. The brothers and sisters, if any, were never so indulgent. As for the girl, either (a) she never looked so good, or (b) they broke off, or (c) the worst happened and both of these things occurred. (The latter is known as being "shot down.") None of these three eventualities tends to cheer the student in January as he sets off to return to his college campus. The sense of adventure and discovery which dominated the September departure is missing. In its place is a sort of delayed homesickness. So... the freshman, having vastly enjoyed the all-too-brief hometown exhilaration of being The Returned College Man, goes back to college to face, under most college calendars, the culmination of all his academic insecurities as the dreaded finals approach. Even the Dartmouth freshman, with that particular ordeal behind him, turns his face toward Hanover with a sobering sense of still having his way to make as a college man.

So in January in residential colleges everywhere, freshman deans are talking to freshmen who come in to say they think they should quit college, or transfer; go to work, or join the army, or travel. They talk about their health, their sinuses, the climate; about your health or business problems, or the illness of aunts or grandparents; they yearn for the life of the big city (whether or not they have ever lived in one); they have suddenly discovered that a college nearer home (where possibly a particular girl happens to be attending or planning to enroll) offers courses especially well adapted to their suddenly discovered needs; etc., etc. Things they never mention are (a) homesickness and (b) worry over finals.

For this description of the January Wish-I-Were-Somewhere-Else Syndrome, I have drawn on various colleagues at other colleges. It's a comfort to all of us to realize how universal this experience is.

Have They Been Happy Holidays?

Our calendar provides a Christmas recess of generous length, but even so you probably will not need all your fingers to count up all your son's evenings at home. Indeed, I surmise you would not find it mathematically too difficult to compute the total of waking hours spent under the family roof, especially if you eliminate those spent at the table and around the refrigerator.

With your sons perhaps at home to read over your shoulders, I hope to sound not too flippant about the foibles of freshmanism. However, one of the many fine qualities of the typical freshman is his honesty and candor, and I am sure he will not mind a few general observations concerning characteristics that may irritate or amuse his elders. After all, parents are People and they are entitled to a Point of View. The main purpose of these letters, beyond the transmission of grades and other essential information, is to make a modest effort at strengthening the insights and the understanding between home and campus; and in this effort I try never to say to a parent anything I would not be prepared to say to the son, or vice versa.

So let's face it: a college freshman is likely to be a pretty self-centered fellow. At the freshman's age and in this once-in-a-lifetime situation of feeling that one must make his place quickly in a new peer group of substantial size and of high and varied abilities, there is a great deal of self-questioning; of self-evaluation in relation to academic challenges, in relation to fellow-students, in relation to girls, in relation to everything. In simple fact, freshmen spend a lot of time thinking about themselves. It is understandable if parents, in the face of this sometimes massive self-preoccupation, occasionally feel rebuffed. It is an odd but widely recognized fact that it never occurs to young men of this age, who are themselves extremely sensitive to criticism from their families, that parents also have feelings, and can also be sensitive about being "wanted."

Some of you have observed, usually with more amusement than irritation, exaggerated assertions of independence by word or deed by these young men who know as well as you do (hence the instinct to assertiveness) their degree of continuing dependence in more than just the financial sense. If some of your freshman sons seem to have all the answers, I can only warn: wait until they are sophomores!

Occasionally tensions build up during the first long vacation and threaten a serious break between the student and his family. "How would you feel," I asked a freshman in one of these situations, "if your son, after having spent only five evenings at home in a three-week vacation, disappeared entirely from the family ken for his last days - including New Year's Eve - and dashed home from the Rose Bowl with just enough time to pick up

his suitcase and add a few final touches to the chaos of his room before rushing off with friends to the airport?"

Well, things usually work out a little better than that and leave a tolerant afterglow of loving amusement behind them. Take as an example this letter which a mother wrote me during a recent January in response to that year's version of this Parents Letter:

"Yes, indeed, the College Man returned! He visited his high school, making sure to wear his 'Dartmouth' jacket although the weather called for the winter coat; and from his talk I later gathered that he made quite an impression. He visited his former French teacher, giving her suggestions which she appreciated, of course. My own ego is only beginning to inflate since his departure. My grammar has been corrected; world events have been explained to me with great patience; and in simple language I have been psychoanalyzed daily. How I ever managed to get through college and hold down a fairly responsible job is still a mystery to me but much more so to him! Yes, it's amazing how much they learn in four short months of college.

"However, I noted a change in him. Living with eight boys has made him more considerate. He waits on himself without complaint and is much nicer to live with..."

Since the Last Letter...

As this is being written a few days in advance of its scheduled mailing, grades are coming in and there's no way of guessing what '71's final record for the term will be, but its mid-term record was good. You'll remember that in the November letter I predicted that almost half of the class would get at least one D or E. As it turned out, only 226 out of 826 received one or more reports. Reported in one subject, 189; in two, 34; in three, 3. Total: 226. The Class of '70, of comparable size, showed, respectively, 164, 32 and 8 for a total of 204.

The Class of 1971 has organized its Freshman Council and has elected its officers, as follows: Pete Hutchinson, president, of Rochester, New York; Pete Elitzer, vice president, of East Greenbush, New York; Garret Rasmussen, secretary, of Rye, New York; and Brian Younger, treasurer, of Long Lake, Minnesota. It also has appointed Randy Pherson of Springfield, Virginia, chairman of the Freshman Fathers Weekend committee.

Expurgated Glossary of Collegiate Slangage

In case you've had any difficulty understanding some of the language used by your son, I'm about to offer you a helpful aid: an abridged glossary of language used by students in communicating with one another. This is taken from a scholarly compilation made by Professor Henry L. Terrie. As a project in a freshman English course, he assigned his students the task of submitting, on 3 X 5 cards, terms of current usage and their definitions. This provided the source material for the compilation which Professor Terrie has kindly consented to let me share with you, with the warning that this language changes almost from moment to moment and this compilation of two or three years ago may be badly out of date.

If you wish to participate in this exercise, first read the following paragraphs of studentese:

"Dartmouth College is a famous monastery, located in Hangover, New Hampshire. Its president is known as Sloan John. The Dean of Students is Dad Thad, and he is ably assisted by The Great Pumpkin. (If Dean Dickerson has a special name, it has not been revealed to me.) Among the courses offered by the faculty are Apes and Stones (Anthropology), Cops and Robbers (Criminology), Groms (Greek & Roman Studies), Rocks (Geology), Weeds (Botany, also known as Bag 'Em & Tag 'Em), God 1 (Religion), and Nuts and Sluts (Abnormal Psychology). In trouble (taking it in the ear), he may have to drop back five yards and punt.

"Grades: Ace, Bomb, Hook (Charlie Bar), Dog, Eagle.

"After a hard day of work and play, the students retire to their dormitories - if they don't decide to flick out. They may do a little booking, or hit the rack, or have a blast. If the blast is too noisy, a fuzz is likely to appear. They use the horn to call for dates on weekends.

"At the end of four years, if the student is a Super Egg or has done enough power booking and avoided appling up, he will become a B of A. Meanwhile, he has tried to avoid being known as a Tweed Bag, a High School Hot Shot, or a Straight Arrow. By showing that he has gear, he may get into a fraternity and earn the privilege of serving as a tenor sandbag."

Now proceed with your translation with the help of the following glossary. This has necessarily been expurgated more than a little for this family journal.

bennies, sb., abbr. of beneficial: sun rays. Ex. "Let's grab some bennies on Muscle Beach."

book, v.i.: to study. Intensive: power book: to study hard.

eagle, sb. and v.i.: = 'E'. Also, dog, hook min, hook plu, ace.

Emmet, sb.: local New Hampshire native manual laborer. Newt: Vermonter.

gear, sb: (essentially undefinable. Sprezzatura?) Exs. "A person has gear if he has intellect, talent or personality. Usually a sure bet to be a success...ability to drink - lots of girls, date for every occasion." "The things that a student must have to be social." "Capacity." "Class spirit." (In student paper on Paradise Lost: "Satan has what a Dartmouth student would call 'gear.'") Adj., gearful.

loosehanger, sb.: a hot ticket, a casual student who comes out with a 4.7. Ex. "no bookin' tonight? You're a real loose hanger." Cf. a straight arrow.

Mickey Mouse, adj.: academic busywork, or anything simple-minded.

punt, v.t.: to drop a course (cf. being "thrown for a loss"). Ex. "After six weeks of Chem 1, I punted." But cf. boot, v.i. punt has also taken on an intransitive meaning, as any course of action followed to avoid study. Ex. "I punted every night last week."

take pipe, v.i.: to be doing badly (in a course). Also, take gas. Ex. "Bill is taking gas in Math 27." Also, take the tubes. Ex. He's taking the tubes in French 1." Also, take it in the ear.

that's close, derog, exp. of skepticism: commonly directed at a screamer (loud mouth) to score on him. Ex. "'Our outfit is a highly-trained aggregate of dedicated men.' 'yeah, fella, that's close.'"

tweed bag, sb.: hyper Ivy League type, who wears a cool uni.

tool shed, sb., adaptation of tool, "one who does not fit into things," an out-to-lunch student, a unit, a yo-yo, a twink, a fink, a light item, a tight hanger, a straight arrow, a booker, a loser, a gaper, a flamer: a fraternity of such types. A member is a shedder.

*

*

*

If you've been at all skeptical about this "booking" business, I call to your attention the following item which appeared on the Campus Police log for an early morning hour on an early December Monday:

"5:05 AM Night-watchman Currier reports that there are two students sleeping in the Forensic Union in College Hall. Checked and found the students were taking a short sleep break from their studies. They resumed their studies upon being awakened."

Nevertheless, I've had the impression recently that freshmen might be beginning to listen to the things we all tell them about the self-defeating aspects of "late booking" and "all-nighters."

*

*

*

I visited the barbershop on the last day of exams. The chairs were full, there was a waiting line, and the floor was inches deep with shorn hair. Just thought you ought to realize what some of you have been spared.

*

*

*

Thanks to You

I want to thank many of you for your letters, some of which are still on my desk awaiting reply. The "form letter" is probably the least satisfactory medium of human communication, and it is a tribute to your fine understanding that some of you have responded in such warmly friendly and personal ways to these letters.

Dean Palmer joins me in wishing the best in 1968 for all of you.

Sincerely yours,

Albert D. Dickerson